

## **Ralph Munro**

Ralph Munro served as Secretary of State of Washington State from 1980 to 2000. He has an impressive background in legislative, elections and government policy spanning more than two decades. Mr. Munro was instrumental in developing and implementing progressive plans making voting more convenient for citizens and improving the administrative process for elections officials.

Under Mr. Munro's leadership, Washington State saw significant advancement in the efficiency of state election services including absentee voting, voter registration, election reporting and voter information. His notable achievements include implementing the presidential primary allowing independent voters to participate in the nomination process; transitioning election equipment from lever machines to more technologically advanced optical scan systems; designing the "Motor Voter" registration system that offers citizens the opportunity to register to vote at the same time they obtain a driver's license; and supporting a program that allowed Washington-based Desert Storm troops to vote via fax from the Persian Gulf.

Mr. Munro has also given his time and expertise to government, civic and volunteer organizations. He served as past president of the National Association of Secretaries of State, co-chaired the International Task Force of the Council of State Governments and trustee and member of the Federal Election Commission Clearinghouse Advisory Panel and the Commission on Voter Participation.

Mr. Munro's numerous awards include the World Citizen Award from the Seattle World Affairs Council, the Warren G. Magnuson Award for outstanding public service and the Executive Leadership Award from the Washington State League of Women Voters.

Mr. Munro has a BA in Education and Political Science from Western Washington University.

## **VOTEHERE, INC.**

Testimony by Ralph Munro

VoteHere Board of Directors; Washington Secretary of State: 1980-2000

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### **Introduction**

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today to talk to you about the timely and important subject of election system reform. Americans deserve the best voting systems possible.

### **VoteHere overview**

VoteHere is an election systems company that has developed the first PC-based, touch-screen e-voting system and conducted the first trial of secure online voting in the United States.

Founded in 1996 as a data security company, VoteHere has conducted both private sector elections and public sector trials in thirteen states and overseas. This past Tuesday, we conducted a trial in Cumberland County, Pennsylvania. We also conducted pilots during November's Presidential election in California and Arizona.

Conducting secure elections with computers is one of the most challenging tasks in cryptography, and has been researched in academic circles for the last 15 years. Our research and development efforts have resulted in significant new advances that add real value for the voter and for those who administer elections. We have brought additional technology to our team through our partnerships with Compaq, Cisco, and Entrust.

### **The Current Election Environment**

Election 2000 put words like chad, overvote, undervote, and butterfly ballot into the national lexicon. For the first time, the general public has seen the election process up close, and for many it wasn't pretty. However, the issues uncovered were not new. Election officials and industry watchdogs have known about these issues for a long time. No great discoveries were made during Election 2000. Known issues were just put in the spotlight by a very, very close election.

How close? In Florida the margin of error was greater than the margin of victory. The margin of victory was 527 votes out of 6 million, requiring a margin of error of less than 0.009%. Florida took the fall, but the press could have easily descended on any other state. Current election systems have error margins of anywhere between 1% to 5%,

representing an error margin in Florida of between 60,000 and 300,000 votes. And what happened in Florida could have happened in any state.

### **Voters Want Modern Technology**

Voters deserve the best elections possible. As I said, just this past Tuesday, we were conducting a pilot election in Cumberland County, PA and in November, 2000, we conducted public sector election trials in Maricopa County, Arizona and San Diego and Sacramento Counties in California. And we got a lot of feedback from voters.

I was in Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania this past Tuesday and I heard first hand from elderly and young voters alike who said they thought the PC-based voting system was – “great,” “easy,” and “much better.” Some of the elderly initially approached the machines with trepidation, but the minute they touched the screen, it was clear how easy it is to vote on this system.

The California pilots were conducted in polling places where voters had the opportunity to try online voting once they had completed their traditional punch card vote. California is looking to bring new technology into its voting process and utilized the pilots to test the interest of voters and election administrators in new voting systems. VoteHere conducted a survey of voters who participated in the California pilot elections, and the results showed that 93% of voters were comfortable with the security of online voting and 97% found online voting to be easier or as easy to use as their current voting system.

In Arizona, Secretary of State Betsey Bayless commissioned an independent survey of voters following their online voting experience, which was also well received. In short, 100% of voters found the online system easy or very easy to use; 8 out of 10 voters surveyed would prefer to vote online, and 85% believe VoteHere’s system is secure.

Voters caught a glimpse of how technology could assist in making the voting experience easier during these pilots. For us, the trials confirmed that there are many benefits that electronic voting at the poll site can bring: ease-of-use, efficient ballot delivery, accurate tabulation – and zero error in voter intent.

### **Evolution of Election Technology**

Before I talk about the PC-based poll site voting solution, I want to spend a minute talking about how electronic voting systems will be deployed in this country. We agree with both the California Internet Voting Task Force Report (January, 2000) and the recently released National Science Foundation Report (March, 2001) that implementation of new voting systems should be *evolutionary, not revolutionary*.

The reports lay out a roadmap with four phases for advancing election technology. First, new computer-based systems will be deployed at the poll-site, where they can be attended and monitored by poll workers. For example, the VoteHere PC-based poll-site voting system currently in certification uses a Compaq PC. Such systems need not be connected

to external communications networks. The next step will be attended voting machines, or kiosks, at public locations. These systems will allow voters to cast their ballots at any such location within the jurisdiction, and will be particularly useful in states permitting early voting. Later, some jurisdictions may deploy unattended voting kiosks housed in physically secure structures similar to ATMs. Finally, many jurisdictions will move to remote voting, just as they allow their voters to vote-by-mail today. In fact, we expect remote voting to be introduced sooner for special constituencies like the military, Americans overseas and people with disabilities.

### **The VoteHere PC-Based Voting Solution – Combining the Highest Security with Ease of Use and Upgrade Path**

We believe the answer is to upgrade our voting systems to use modern computer technology – PCs. The familiar desktop PC that you already use in your offices and homes can bring ease-of-use, efficient ballot delivery, accurate, verifiable tabulation, and the means to capture true voter intent.

**Innovative Technology:** All election systems must meet the simultaneous requirements of security, privacy, and audit. Think of this as a triangle of three requirements, with each point representing one of the essential elements of election integrity.

Security means that no one can compromise an election, including the vendor or an election official. Security also means that cast ballots cannot be changed, added, or deleted.

Audits and recounts are critical. Machine counts are more reliable, accurate, and faster than hand counts as long as the system uses indelible ballot images.

But what makes voting technology so difficult is the “privacy” requirement: the secret ballot. “How” a citizen voted must be kept secret from everyone – even from election officials, even through an exhaustive audit.

Any new technology, including online voting systems, must meet or exceed these standards and be tested and approved to this effect. VoteHere’s system meets all three requirements for election integrity: security, ballot privacy, fully auditable with an election transcript that is universally verifiable.

**Technology Upgrades:** Technology is advancing so rapidly these days that as soon as you put your money down for a new computer, you find out that a newer, faster, better model has just been introduced. You want the new model, but you’re stuck with the old one for a while. If we are to follow an evolutionary path, purchasing patterns for election equipment must change. Just like a county’s copy machine, voting systems should be leased on an evolving technology basis where new certified equipment can be deployed without large capital expenditure. Elections should be paid for on a per-precinct, per-election basis. Later, when remote voting is deployed, elections should be paid for on a

per-vote-cast basis. This way, election officials can continuously take advantage of technological advances.

**Election PCs can be Reused in Communities:** Another advantage to utilizing off the shelf PCs for voting is the reusability factor. Between elections, county officials can put these PCs into county libraries and schools instead of just putting them away to collect dust. This gives counties more value for their dollars

**Service and Scalability:** Many thousands of voting devices will be upgraded as a result of Election 2000. In order to meet the demand created by the Florida election and still provide the best product and service to our customers, we have partnered with Compaq, a world-class technology and service company. This allows us to support county pollsites on Election Day, including help with set-up and teardown, and assistance during the election. Our PC based election model also allows election administrators to use off-the-shelf hardware, which makes the system easy to install and repair, and ensures we can quickly scale our supply to meet the increased demand without compromising on quality.

**Voter Intent:** We heard a lot in the aftermath of Florida about voter intent. The image of poll workers holding punch cards up to the light continues to haunt us. No one but the voter should interpret intent. With our electronic system, hanging chads and pregnant chads and swinging chads are no longer part of the vocabulary. The voter has complete control over his or her intent, and it is a very simple process. The voter touches the computer screen to cast each vote. When the voter is finished, the computer displays the votes and asks the voter if this is what he or she intended. At this point, the voter has the ability to go back and correct any vote if necessary. Intent is completely controlled by the voter, which is how it should be.

**Voter Privacy:** Voters in our country have a fundamental right to privacy and voting systems have an obligation to protect voters' privacy at all times. Some voting systems seem to forget this right. With certain optical-scan systems, a voter who skips a race or "under votes" will have his or her ballot returned immediately. In order to validate the vote, the voter must go to a poll worker to override the system and allow the undervote. In doing this the poll worker can see which candidates the voter has chosen – a violation of privacy.

**Convenience:** Voters like our system because it is convenient. I spoke earlier about our technology roadmap and the evolution of voting systems. As the technology of voting evolves, it will become more and more convenient to vote. We believe this is desirable and necessary in a society that places a premium on time, efficiency and convenience. The VoteHere technology allows for convenience but still protects the integrity of the election.

**Accessibility:** Over the course of my tenure as Washington Secretary of State, I have had the pleasure of working closely with the disability community. Recently, I have heard Jim Dickson from the National Organization on Disability say the disability community is unified on the fact that every polling place must be accessible and must allow a secret

ballot for the visually impaired. And he has put these words into action with recent lawsuits. Electronic systems such as the PC model allow those with disabilities to have access to the machines and, for the first time, blind voters to have a secret ballot. The technology exists. We need to ensure it is utilized so these traditionally disenfranchised voters can vote just like everyone else.

**Military Voting:** As we saw in the 2000 Presidential election, many military voters are disenfranchised. We have a military voting solution that combines our PC-based system with a remote online voting capability to bring those serving our country in the armed services and their families the ability to vote with convenience and privacy while still getting their votes in on time -- to be counted.

**Accuracy:** Elections must be accurate. Much of the confusion after the 2000 election in Florida occurred because the proper procedures were not in place to deal with a statewide recount. Florida showed us that election systems need to support a comprehensive recount. Any recount must establish three criteria: (1) "legitimate voters" (2) casting "immutable ballots" (3) to produce "repeatable results." Machine counts are more reliable, accurate, and faster than handcounts as long as the system relies on ballot images, not single machines or counters. Doug Lewis, Executive Director of the Election Center, has recently pointed out that handcounts are no solution: "The mind gets tired, the eyes get tired, the body gets tired."

An electronic system can alleviate these problems by providing a full recount in a matter of minutes at the touch of a button. We could have recounted all of the ballots cast in the state of Florida numerous times on election night, and the tallies would have matched every time. Our system also provides the means to produce a paper audit trail to document that the votes were counted as cast.

### **What Congress should do**

In conclusion, there is a better way to vote in this country. There will never be another "Florida" if we enact appropriate election reform.

As I see it, your role in Congress is to continue generating attention to the issues of election reform so that states and counties don't assume that 30-year-old systems are OK just because they didn't have a visible problem in the last election. There are electronic and online solutions that exist today which will prevent many of the challenges we saw in the last election. Your help is very important in educating those in your districts about these important solutions.

I also see a role for Congress in helping disenfranchised voters -- specifically the disabled and military communities. These two groups have been consistently left out of the voting process, but now the technology exists to include them in our elections with the same levels of privacy and convenience as the rest of the country. These groups deserve the right to vote -- just like all Americans.

Every one of you knows that with today's technology, we can do much better. But if policymakers don't move now to ensure that the nation's election systems get upgraded, the momentum will be lost.

Finally, we are here to help. As you wade into these important issues realize there are better election solutions that exist today and we are here as a resource to you and to those in your states as you look for answers to these important challenges.

Thank you.